

New Hampshire Special Education On-site Evaluation Report

SAU# 7

**Paul F. Allen, Superintendent
Vergil Grant, Special Education Director**

Final Report

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Evaluation Conducted on November 3 - 4, 1997

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New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

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Students With Disabilities
(Commendations, Citations, and Suggestions for each school)

Note: It should be noted that suggestions are not considered corrective actions and therefore are given as technical assistance. The district is not mandated to implement them.

New Hampshire Special Education Program Approval Report

SAU# 7

I. INTRODUCTION:

A New Hampshire Department of Education Special Education Program Approval visit was conducted at SAU# 7 comprised of the following schools: Colebrook Academy, Colebrook Elementary and Middle School, West Stewartstown School, The Hollow School, Pittsburgh School and preschool special needs programming .

The visiting team met on November 3-4, 1997 in order to review the status of special education services being provided to eligible students.

Activities related to this evaluation included the close review of all the teaching certifications of special education staff, analysis of SPEDIS data and random inspection of student records. Interviews were held with the special education director, building principals, regular and special education teachers, related service personnel and administrators as time and availability permitted. In addition, the team conducted parent interviews via phone. Throughout the visit the team had full cooperation from the school personnel and this helpfulness was greatly appreciated.

The report, which you are about to read, represents the consensus of all the members of the visiting team. Please keep in mind that this is a "report for exception", meaning that only exceptions to the N.H. State Standards have been addressed. If a component is not mentioned, that does not mean that the team did not review it; it just means that there were no citations of noncompliance to the Standards found in that particular area.

II. STATUS OF PREVIOUS ON-SITE: *Conducted October 13-14, 1995*

The visiting team determined that SAU #7 has made significant progress in correcting a majority of the citations of noncompliance noted during the previous evaluation. Under the leadership of Vergil Grant, Director of Special Education, standardized procedures have been implemented which assure compliance with the *New Hampshire Standards for the Education of Students with Disabilities*. In particular issues that have been generally corrected are:

- Composition of Evaluation/Placement Teams
- Qualifications of Staff
- Evaluation Timelines
- Adherence to Policy and Procedure from Referral to Placement
- Evaluation Timelines

III. ISSUES OF SIGNIFICANCE:

As the visiting team conducted its activities several issues of significance, defined as problem areas SAU-wide, were identified by the team. The first issue is the apparent difficulty the school system has encountered recruiting and retaining qualified staff. At the time of the visit, all staff were appropriately qualified for their particular areas of instruction and/or service, the one exception being the guidance counselor at the Pittsburg School. The Director of Special Education is certified in a number of areas including learning disabilities, mental retardation and emotional handicaps and as such currently serves as the required team member for children with these disabilities. There are no other individuals employed by of SAU #7 who hold one or more of these credentials. The need to have additional staff qualified in these areas remains a challenge for the administration of SAU #7.

The second major issue is the need to update all of the policies, procedures and attendant forms for special education throughout SAU #7. A good start has been made in this regard by the Director of Special Education and his efforts are to be commended. The New Hampshire Department of Education has made available a systematic process for accomplishing this task including the availability of technical assistance. Completion of this document will facilitate the delivery of educational services to students as well as meet all compliance and legal requirements .

The third major issue is the adequacy of the Resource Room space at Colebrook Academy. Bookcases are used to divide the room into instructional areas for special education and a number of other programs. The space is noisy and as a result presents difficulties for those children who are easily distracted by external movement or sound. Staff also reported that the space is cold and uncomfortable at times.

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

SAU WIDE

Name of Program(s) Visited: All

COMMENDATIONS:

- The special education director closely monitors and supervises the provision of services and has done exceptional work in communication with staff, parents and community agencies.
- The SAU #7 special education secretary has done an outstanding job of organizing the schedules for timelines, data flow, notifications and general support for the effective administration of the special education system.
- The staff of each district were found to be dedicated and genuinely committed to their work with children. A willingness to continue to seek ways to help each child succeed was evident throughout SAU #7.

CITATIONS: (in numerical order)

POLICIES, PROCEURES AND ASSURANCES IN NEED OF UPDATING:

Ed# 1103.02(d)	Referrals
Ed# 1105.01(a,b,c,d)	Ongoing Requirements
Ed# 1107.01(a-g)	Testing Instrument
Ed# 1107.03(b)	Multidisciplinary Evaluation
Ed# 1107.03(h)	Student's Educational History
Ed# 1107.05(a, 1-2)	Qualified Examiners
Ed# 1107.05(e)	Team Composition
Ed# 1107.06(a,b 1-3)	Evaluation Report
Ed# 1107.07(c, 1-3)	Determination of Disabilities
Ed# 1107.08(c)	Observation
Ed# 1109.02(a,c,e,f,g)	IEP Meetings, Implementation, Transition
Ed# 1109.03(a,b 1-8)	Participants in IEP Development

IV. COMMENDATIONS, CITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS:

CITATIONS (Con't)

POLICIES, PROCEURES AND ASSURANCES IN NEED OF UPDATING:

Ed# 1109.11(a)	Monitoring
Ed# 1111.01(b-f)	Extended School Year IEP's
Ed# 1115.03(a-h)	Placement Team Membership
Ed# 1115.05(3,b,c)	Placement Team Membership
Ed# 1119.01(a-b)	Placement Team Membership
Ed# 1119.05(a)	Grouping
Ed# 1119.05(b, 2,3,5)	Maximum Enrollment & Academic Range
Ed# 1119.06(d)	Facilities
Ed# 1119.11(a)	Suspension
Ed# 1121.03(a,c)	Request for Surrogate Parent
Ed# 1123.05(a,1-2, b)	Annual Notification of Rights
Ed# 1125.02(b)	Right to File Complaint
Ed# 1125.03(a)	Written Prior Notice

SUGGESTIONS:

- Parents interviewed were supportive of their children's current program and the responsiveness of their respective district school. In some instances parents faulted their schools for delays or perceived unresponsiveness prior to the tenure of the present Director of Special Education.

The staff at each school needs to be made aware of their responsibilities for meeting timelines and for being responsive to parents as required by the Standards.

SAU-Wide Interview Summary

Parents

Parents responded positively and negatively to the question of the extent of their satisfaction with the provision of I.E.P. services. Parents are an excellent source for information concerning the perceived value and/or effectiveness of educational issues. The concerns expressed by parents during the interviews are indicative of the need to improve communication with and involvement of parents in their children's education.

Principals

Principals were pleased with the efforts of teachers, related service personnel and aides to provide the instruction and services stated in student's I.E.P.'s. Students with disabilities are succeeding in regular classes because of the modifications made by staff to meet the individual needs and learning styles of students. The need to upgrade and increase the use of technology in classrooms was expressed as a need by principals. The importance of aligning local curriculum and instruction with the N.H. Curriculum Frameworks was underscored as a goal of major importance.

Teachers

Teachers indicated a thorough working knowledge of the requirements of each student's I.E.P. Regular and special education teachers were supportive of one another and worked cooperatively in the provision of services. A variety of staff development opportunities have been available to enable teachers to keep their skills and knowledge current. Staff expressed the need for in-service sessions for dealing with student with ADHD.

Related Service Personnel

Related service personnel were positive about the integration of their activities into students total education program. Good support and communication with special education teams and case managers was expressed. The availability of space for conducting 1:1 counseling was indicated.

PRESCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Preschool

COMMENDATIONS:

- The scope of services provided to preschool children by district is commended.
- There is great satisfaction and involvement of the parents.
- Parents are pleased with the progress of their children.

CITATIONS:

Ed # 1109.01(f) 1 file: Statement of transportation and O.T. services was missing.

Ed # 1111.01 1 file: No evidence that ESY programming was considered

SUGGESTIONS:

None

COLEBROOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: 1.) Resource Rm. Math 2.) Grade 1 Classroom
3.) Grade 3 Classroom

2.) Grade 1 Classroom

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff are working to improve the efficiency of the referral process and attempting to make certain that referrals are appropriate.
- Staff have worked hard to address citations noted in the previous onsite report
- Check lists located in files have helped to ensure student records are complete.
- Whenever possible, students are mainstreamed into the regular classroom. This ranges from one-on-one assistance to minimal support in the classroom.
- Principal reports that the school has held workshops to show parents how to help their children at home.

CITATIONS:

Ed# 1107.03(a)

On the evaluation summary for hearing impaired child, there was no evidence that a hearing evaluation had been conducted. The acutal evaluation was on file, but not included in the evaluation summary report.

Ed# 1107.07(c)

Certified teacher in the area of suspected disability was not invited to or in attendance at the SEE/PT meeting determining the student's disability.

Ed# 1109.04(a)

Parents were given a seven-day notice of a "Progress Meeting". This was actually the date of the IEP meeting (but a ten-day notice was not given).

Ed# 1119.06

Facility is not handicapped accessible; fire exits are actually ladders in the class, there are two stairs to the bathrooms, etc. Classrooms are crowded and teachers expressed concern that this negatively impacts learning.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The SAU may want to consider other north country schools, such as the Ed Fenn School as a resource for pre-referral process (school in Gorham with good process involving a team).
- The SAU might want to consider the provision of teacher workshops that are closer to this district or offered within the SAU to ensure greater participation.

COLEBROOK ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, Continued									
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SUGGESTIONS: Con't

- It appears that on occasion, students are being pulled from class for services; in some instances because staff do not know how to deal with them. It would be helpful to have literature available to teachers (or using NCEF).
- It was difficult to find out who was invited to the meetings. It would be helpful if a copy of all parent notices were kept in the file. Often time these notices are attached to the minutes, but in some instances no notices were attached.
- Ten-day waiver form for meetings would be an appropriate file piece (to remediate grade three classroom problem).
- The SAU needs to continue to take a critical look at the "facility" and how to address the issue of handicap accessibility and crowded conditions in classrooms.

COLEBROOK MIDDLE SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited:

Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- Student files are well maintained and contain most required documentation.
- The staff at Colebrook Middle School were friendly, cooperative, child centered and interested in their students' programs..
- The staff appeared to be committed to inclusion and to students and their families

CITATIONS:

Ed# 1109.03(a-d) 1 file: IEP was signed by individual other than parent; no documentation that this person was appointed as legal guardian or surrogate parent.

Ed# 1109.04(a) 1 file: did not contain evidence of 10-day notice.of IEP meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The district may want to consider using the New Hampshire Department of Education model forms.
- Clarify and expand statements for least restrictive environment and extended school year programming.
- Space for provision of all services is an issue at the middle school; conditions are quite crowded.
- Staff may want to review their procedures for determinations of educational disabilities. Procedures could be more specific and better defined

COLEBROOK ACADMEY SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- Regular education teachers appear to be well aware of needed modifications and classroom inclusion techniques. English teachers could recite modifications from memory.
- Files are well maintained and are in very good order.
- The special education teachers work well as a team and are knowledgeable of students' programs.
- The building principal is actively involved with special education programs.
- The Life Skills program provides students with a wide variety of activities.
- Parents expressed satisfaction with the special education staff and commended the teachers.

CITATIONS:

Ed # 1107.05(k)	1 file: Extension was signed but evaluation meeting was held well after extension (45 day) expired.
Ed # 1109.03(c)	1 file: No evidence that student was invited to meeting.
Ed # 1109.01(g)	1 file: IEP did not include projected dates for initiation of services or anticipated duration of services.
Ed # 1109.01(h)	1 file: IEP did not include length of school year/length of school day.
Ed # 1109.01(i)	1 file: IEP did not include short-term objectives for speech.
Ed # 1109.01(j)	1 file: The individuals responsible for implementation were not listed in IEP.
Ed # 119.06(b)	Resource Room needs partitions to cut down on noise and distraction.

SUGGESTIONS:

The Resource room could be improved by building a partition to cut down on noise and distraction. The team was concerned regarding the bookcases currently dividing the room and whether they were anchored or could be toppled over. This could be a safety issue. Staff also indicated that the room is very cold in the winter.

PITTSBURG SCHOOL

Program(s) Visited: Resource Room

COMMENDATIONS:

- Staff commitment to students of all ability ranges is exceptional.
- Student integration into regular education is effectively accomplished.
- Principal's vision of "all individuals achieving success" is pervasive throughout the school.
- Special education teacher has superb rapport with staff, students, and parents.

CITATIONS:

<u>Ed # 1107.02</u>	1 file: No evidence of referral in file; written permission not given immediately (30 days).
<u>Ed # 1107.07</u>	1 file: No evidence that LEA representative at the evaluation team meeting.
<u>Ed # 1107.08</u>	2 files: Written report and/or observation was missing from file.
<u>Ed # 1109.04</u>	1 file: contained evidence that parental notice of the IEP meeting was provided to parents in 7 days instead of 10.

SUGGESTIONS:

- Consistency in headings and folders would make paperwork easier to find and trace.

WEST SIDE SCHOOL (Stewartson)

Program(s) Visited: Resource Room

CITATIONS:

Ed # 1107.08 1 file: No observation noted in file.

Ed # 1107.02(b&d) 1 file: referral was missing from file.

Ed # 1107.03 1 file: there was no evidence of physician input on re-evaluation.

Ed # 1107.05 1 file: the evaluation was not completed within 45 days; no extension sign by parents was noted.

Ed # 1109.04 1 file: did not contain evidence of 10-day notice of meeting.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The district might consider having a full time teacher aide at the West Side School.
- Regular education teachers may want to take advantage of workshops and professional development opportunities regarding special education and "best practices" for dealing with challenging students.

ADDENDUM

JAMES O' MONITORING PROGRAM

SAU# 7

Student File Review

Case Study Document

Reimbursement Claim Form

Case Study Addendum Form

James O' Files

CITATIONS:

<u>Ed # 1130.04(1)</u>	If emergency placements have been made and school district is not notified, this entire section cannot be implemented.
<u>Ed # 1107.07</u>	Determination of Disabilities - possible MR?.
<u>Ed # 1102.35</u>	Transition plan needs to expand for Vocational Rehabilitation services.
<u>Ed # 1109.01</u>	Note public agencies. Plan linkages.
<u>Ed # 1109.03</u>	Private facilities may need to provide teachers credentials also.